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USDA FOR FAS/LYNN REICH AND DICK HUGHES
STATE FOR IO/EDA SETH WINNICK, OES/ENV JULIE GOURLEY AND
IO/S GEORGE ABRAHAMS
USAID FOR RALPH CUMMINGS
ATHENS FOR CLEVERLEY

FROM FODAG

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: FAO OECD Group: Term Limits and Bureaus

1. (U) Summary: The OECD group met June 9, 2003 to discuss bureau positions for FAO Council and Conference. The outgoing Chair (New Zealand) asked for views on expanding the mandate of the group beyond allocating bureau positions. Those who spoke (including USDel) did not support expanding the mandate. A smaller group of OECD countries met afterwards on Director General Term Limits. The group shared concerns that the Secretariat had yet to issue documentation on the item, and agreed to urge Ambassador Mekouar, Chair of the Term Limits "Friends" Group to request the secretariat to issue a document on the item as soon as possible. End Summary.

Council and Conference Bureau Positions

2. (U) The OECD group (thus called as it is composed of FAO members who are also members of OECD) met June 9, 2003 under the Chairmanship of Simon Draper of New Zealand. The group discussed Bureau composition for the June 23-28 124th FAO Council, and put forth some preliminary ideas for the November 29-December 10, 32nd FAO Conference.

-- FAO 124th Council: Chair: Ambassador Aziz Mekouar (Morocco); Vice-Chairs: The Group endorsed OECD member Germany for the OECD Vice-Chair position. The two G-77 Vice-Chairs are not yet known. Similarly, the G-77 Chair and members for the drafting committee are not yet known. The OECD members of Drafting Committee are: U.S., Australia, Italy, Germany, Finland and Japan

-- FAO 32nd Conference: New Zealand will Chair Conference. The OECD group will have one of the three Vice-Chairs. OECD will chair Commission I this year; G-77 will chair Commission II. The Chair reported that Sweden was interested in the Vice-Chair position and Austria interested in chairing Commission I. No final decision was taken.

Mandate of OECD Group

3. (U) Mandate of OECD: As this was his last meeting as Chair of the OECD Group (the Chairmanship will move to Norway in July), the Chair asked whether members had views on the question of expanding the mandate of the OECD group to include policy coordination. USDel stated that the OECD should continue to coordinate bureau positions; it served as a useful body for exchanging views, and certainly members used it as a platform to encourage "convergence" of views; but it should not coordinate country positions. Japan noted that having OECD coordinate country positions would compromise Japan's (and the Republic of Korea's) ability to continue as a member of the Asian Group. Poland raised another point concerning those non-OECD members of the European regional group which were not members of the G-77, reminding the group that these countries were left out when it came to bureau positions which were allocated on the basis of OECD/G-77 membership.

Term Limits

4. (U) A smaller group of OECD members of the "Friends of the Chair" on Director General Term Limits met to discuss the situation of the upcoming Council agenda item on term limits. It was recalled that OECD members of the "Friends" had written to the "Friends" Chair, Ambassador Aziz Mekouar, expressing concern that his last report did not accurately capture the views of the "Friends" on transition measures. OECD members objected to Mekouar's reference to "the understanding that any country had the right to nominate any candidate for the office of Director-General" and "the understanding that the Conference...shall have authority to elect under the new

system any of the nominated candidates, including the incumbent Director General."

15. (U) The group noted with concern that Ambassador Mekouar -- possibly as a result of his final report being contested -- had still not communicated to the Secretariat the outcome of the Friends of the Chair

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Group. Absent any communication, the Secretariat has informed us that they cannot issue a document. The group agreed that a second communication to Ambassador Mekouar was in order (in fact, the Greek EU President has already written to him along these lines) urging him to instruct the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for Council which simply states the agreement reached in the Friends of the Chair, viz that the FAO Basic Texts be amended so that the Director General may serve two terms only, with the first term being six years and the second term four years.

16. (SBU) The Group also discussed concerns that certain African countries would still try to link the change in the Basic Texts to some "understanding" that the current Director General may run again. As noted in reftel, the DG is not barred from running, but OECD members seek to ensure that there is no implicit support for him doing so; any "understanding" that he may run again provides that implicit support. The EU members of the group argued that the most important outcome was the change to the basic texts, and that this should not be lost. U.S. and Australia noted that their instructions on this issue were quite firm: "silence" on the question of transition measures, or no agreement. Hall

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